

NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



GROUND BROKEN FOR STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

It's important to understand that veterans, when they served their country, didn't have a choice of the weather or the location. They served!

This week veterans demonstrated that no matter what the weather conditions are, rain, snow, sleet, they'll be out there. And they weren't alone! Elected officials, community leaders, and business leaders, joined veterans for the groundbreaking of South Dakota's first state veteran's cemetery.

The program started with the presentation of colors by members of the South Dakota Veterans Council and the national anthem sung by the Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15 Men's Choir.

Themed messages of support for the cemetery and our heroes were provided by U.S. Senator Mike Rounds, SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock, SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, South Dakota Veterans Council President Terry Paulsen, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves, and Governor Kristi Noem. All echoed this was long over due.

South Dakota is one of only five states that does not have a state cemetery.

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STATE CEMETERY (CONTINUED)

SDDVA is hopeful that dirt will start moving in November, with the project completed within 18 months from that time.



“This cemetery is a credit to the hard work of the South Dakota Veterans Council,” said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. “It’s a credit to never giving up. It’s a credit to having a vision that spans over ten years. And it’s a testament to the sacrifice of the men and women who will lay here.”



Secretary Whitlock concluded his remarks by thanking the numerous partners that have made this project a reality—partners included: Governor Noem, Lt. Governor Rhoden, South Dakota Legislature and the numerous lobbyists that supported the legislation, City of Sioux Falls and the City Council, National Cemetery Administration, Office of State Engineering, Stockwell Engineers Inc., Journey Construction, and last but not least, our Department staff.

“It is my hope that, for decades to come, generations will come here to not only honor this sacrifice, but to reflect on our own opportunity to serve; to reflect on our duties as citizens; and to realize that all of us, too, have a role to play in defending our republic and the freedoms we hold dear,” said Whitlock.

Deputy Secretary Pollard thanked the partners that helped ensure a successful groundbreaking ceremony – SDNG 196th MEB, American Legion Patriot Guard Riders, Post 15 American Legions Men’s Choir, John Small and Sunny Radio, Adam and Jackie Heck and NB Golf Carts, Mapleton Township, Maximum Promotions, Journey Construction, the South Dakota Veterans Council and their



Honor Guard, Mark Spader, and the SDDVA staff.



SD AIR, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD UNITS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARD

South Dakota Air and Army National Guard units continue to earn top honors for performance excellence as they brought home four awards from the 2019 National Guard Association of the United States annual conference in Denver, Aug. 31-Sept. 2.

The S.D. Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing of Sioux Falls was the recipient of Winston P. Wilson Trophy, presented to the most outstanding Air National Guard flying unit of the year equipped with jet fighter or reconnaissance aircraft.

S.D. Army National Guard units once again received awards in all three of the Army categories.

The 139th Brigade Support Battalion of Brookings received the Maj. Gen. Milton A. Reckord Trophy as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation for achieving the highest standards in training and readiness.

The Huron-based Forward Support Company of the 153rd Engineer Battalion received the General John J. Pershing Plaque for weapons marksmanship. The unit attained the highest figure of merit (highest percentage of assigned members qualified) during annual weapons qualification firing with assigned individual weapons.

The Vermillion-based 730th Area Support Medical Company received the Certificate of Victory for having the highest overall figure of merit in the nation.

"Once again the men and women of the South Dakota National Guard have shown they are among the best units across the country," said Gov. Kristi Noem. "Receiving these awards is a testament to their commitment, dedication and hard work in maintaining their operational readiness for our state and nation."

"Units from the South Dakota Air and Army National Guard continue to demonstrate their outstanding performance and excellence in readiness by receiving these prestigious national awards," said Maj. Gen. Jeff

Marlette, SDNG adjutant general. "I couldn't be more proud of the Soldiers and Airmen of the South Dakota National Guard!"



POW/MIA RECOGNITION

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, as “POW/MIA Recognition Day,” calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who fought bravely for our freedoms.

“While we are grateful to all of those who have served our nation, this day is designated to remember and recognize the sacrifices endured by those members of the Armed Forces of the United States who were held as prisoners of war or remain missing in action,” said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Whitlock encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time Sept. 20th to honor the POW/MIA’s who fought to protect our freedoms and lost theirs, as well as remember those engaged in today’s struggle to guard our way of life for future generations.



“In their service to our country, former prisoners of war and those missing in action have sacrificed mightily to maintain the promise of liberty that we hold dear,” said Whitlock. “POW/MIA Day affords all of us a great opportunity to reaffirm our vow to never forget the courage of our nation’s staunchest defenders – our former POWs and MIAs. We owe them and their families our gratitude.”

The state of South Dakota continues to support efforts to account for every service member classified as Missing in Action.

South Dakota currently has 24 prisoners of war—18 from World War II and six from Korean War. Our MIAs for South Dakota total 133—88 World War II Veterans, 38 Korean War Veterans and seven Vietnam Veterans.

BARTUNEK PROMOTED TO COLONEL IN SDNG

Deb Bartunek, of Rapid City, was promoted to the rank of colonel in the South Dakota Army National Guard during a ceremony at Camp Rapid, Sept. 8.

Bartunek, a native of Whitewood, serves fulltime as the G4 deputy chief of staff of logistics for Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City.

"It is a privilege for me to work with all of the dedicated Soldiers of the South Dakota National Guard, and an honor to be able to lead them at this level," said Bartunek. "Without their support, and the support of my family, I would not have been able to achieve this accomplishment."

Bartunek becomes the second female officer to achieve the rank of colonel in the SDARNG.

Bartunek began her military service in 1983 enlisting in the 147th Army Band in Mitchell. In 1990 she attended the South Dakota National Guard Military Academy and received her commission as a second lieutenant in the Transportation Corps.

Over the course of her career, Bartunek has served in a variety of command and staff positions to include: 1742nd Transportation Company platoon leader; 88th Troop Command personnel officer, 196th Regiment operations and logistics officer; and the 109th Regional Support Group's administrative officer and deputy commander positions.

Bartunek has commanded at the company and battalion levels with the 665th Maintenance Company and 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute). She has also served in multiple fulltime positions at Joint Force Headquarters to include: personnel management, equal employment opportunity, human resources, and deputy logistics officer positions.

Bartunek also mobilized from 2003 through 2005 as the commander of the 665th Maintenance Company supporting Operation Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle.

Bartunek holds a Bachelor of Education degree from South Dakota State University, a Master in Business Administration in military management from Touro University International and a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

Bartunek resides in Rapid City with her husband, Ted, and they have two children: Trevor and Austin. She is also the daughter of Joyce Kurtz and the late Darwin Kurtz of Whitewood.



SD GUARD'S 196TH MEB RECEIVES NEW SENIOR NCO LEADERSHIP

Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Meyer is the new senior noncommissioned officer for the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade after a change of responsibility ceremony at the National Guard Armory in Sioux Falls, Sept. 7.

Meyer, of Sioux Falls, assumed responsibility from Command Sgt. Maj. Todd Mettler, who served in the position since 2016.

As the unit's senior NCO, Meyer is responsible for advising the unit commander, Col. David Daily, on all aspects of the brigade's enlisted soldiers, providing guidance and mentorship to those soldiers, and assisting in ensuring the brigade is prepared to handle all missions it is assigned.

The 196th MEB is a multifaceted unit responsible for enhancing and protecting operational and tactical freedom of action for a supported maneuver force.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be your command sergeant major," Meyer said. "Command Sgt.

Maj. Mettler is leaving the brigade in a great place, and I look forward to the chance to help continue to improve it."

Meyer emphasized the need to focus on Army standards and discipline in order to excel in times of increasing operational tempo. He also stressed the need to keep service members' families informed of military events and training, as their support is integral to the success of the unit.

"I want to say thank you to everybody," Mettler said, who is now assigned to Joint Force Headquarters as the G3 operations command sergeant major. "We've built a great brigade here; we truly have. I look forward to working with you all in the future."

Meyer enlisted in the military in 1986 as a field artilleryman at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Since then he has served in multiple assignments across South Dakota to include units in Sioux Falls, Canton, Salem, Mitchell, Fort Meade and Watertown. He also deployed to Iraq in 2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



SDDVA'S JOE LEASURE RECOGNIZED BY REEVES

This week while in South Dakota for the groundbreaking of the new state veteran's cemetery, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves visited the SDDVA Claims Office. He visited the staff and thanked them for the role they are playing in enhancing the lives of our veterans.

Under Secretary Reeves also noticed that SDDVA VSO Joe Leasure was a Purple Heart recipient and SDDVA's Employee of the Year and presented him with his challenge coin. What a great honor to have the Under Secretary recognize your talents and attributes!



VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR AND RIBBON CUTTING AT PIERRE'S NEW CBOC

The Department of Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System and STG International, Inc. (STGi) will be hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony and resource fair on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at the new Pierre Community Based Outpatient Clinic. The clinic is located at 1615 North Harrison Avenue Ste. 20, inside the Northridge Mall.

All are welcome to attend the ribbon cutting and short remarks at 1:30 p.m. in the lobby of the clinic. Veterans are encouraged to stop by anytime between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to meet the staff, tour the spacious clinic and learn more about all the clinic services. There will be information booths set up to provide resources and assistance about a variety of federal and state programs. Teams from SDDVA and the Hughes County VSO office will be on hand to assist veterans.



SDDVA LEADERS HONORED



This week SDDVA Program Manager's Heather Bullerman and Krystal Taylor and Minnehaha County VSO Kathy Richardson were presented "Star Quilts."

The quilts were presented and gifted by SDDVA Claims Examiner Rebekah Bianas and her Grandpa Orville Mestes, in honor of her Grandma Darlene Mestes Memorial. Grandpa Orville Mestes gave his blessing and wrapped the quilts around their shoulders as a symbolic way to honor and protect them on their journey through life.

Rebekah holds these three women in highest regards for their leadership, their continued encouragement, guidance, and support in assisting Rebekah in succeeding after the loss of

her Grandma Darlene the Matriarch of their family.

Generosity is an important virtue among the beliefs and traditions of the Lakota (Sioux) people. The star quilt was adopted by many tribes during the reservation era, when tribes were displaced from their traditional homelands onto Indian reservations and witnessed the near extermination of the buffalo. The giving of buffalo hides and robes is a tradition among many tribes as an act of love, peace and respect. Star quilts were given away in place of buffalo robes. Giving a star quilt is one of the greatest honors among the Lakota, Dakota and other Northern Plains tribes that have traditionally hunted buffalo. The image of a star quilt serves as a reminder of the significance and honor that comes from giving.

The pattern of the star quilt is inspired by the Morning Star. The Morning Star is the last and brightest star in the eastern horizon before dawn. It was believed the Morning Star represented the way the spirits came to earth and served as a link between the living and those who have passed.



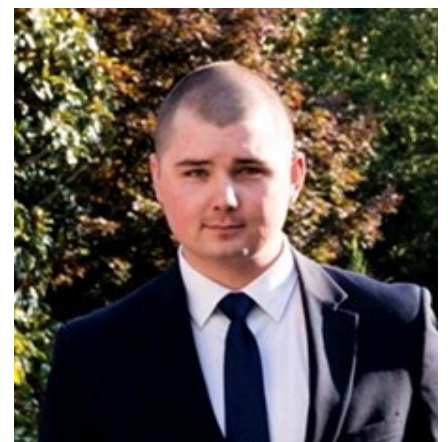
MONSSEN JOINS SDDVA TEAM

Jake Monssen joins the SDDVA Pierre team. Monssen will serve as the Special Projects Coordinator while Guy Arnold is deployed.

Monssen, a military brat, traveled the country with his parents and sister while his father served in the Marines. He knows the struggles that our veterans face. Jake has 13 family members that have served in the military since World War I.

Jake's favorite sport is hockey and is a dedicated Minnesota Wild fan. When not cheering on hockey teams, Jake can be found fishing and hunting.

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Jake to our team.



Project Connect

SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

Faith Lutheran Church | 714 N. Grand Ave | Pierre | 3PM – 6PM

Project Connect is a one-stop service center providing access to a variety of services for individuals and families who may need assistance in Pierre and Fort Pierre communities.

FREE TRANSPORTATION to and from Project Connect provided by River Cities Transit. Please call 605.945.2360 to pre-schedule your ride.

On-site Agencies and Services

- Kids Corner
- Flu vaccines for all ages
- Vocational Rehab
- Pierre Area Referral
- Veteran Support
- Job Corps
- Oahe Family YMCA
- Health Screenings
- Pierre Housing
- Capital Area Counseling
- Hot Meal
- Fluoride Varnish Treatments
- Oahe Child Development
- Consumer Rights
- Services for the Blind/Visually Impaired
- Employment Assistance
- Economic Assistance
- Domestic Violence Services
- Boys & Girls Club
- Community Health Services

Free Family Photos, Free Haircuts, Plus Much More!

For more information contact Denise Albertson or Davis Schofield at 605.773.3181.

One Day | One Stop | One Goal



VETERAN STAND DOWN & RESOURCE FAIR

November 5, 2019
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Rapid City
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center

SERVICES OFFERED

Lunch
Employment Services
Clothing
Legal Assistance

VA Benefits
Readjustment Counseling
Housing Referrals
Much More!

* Please bring a copy of your DD214, dependent information, and identification to the event. Documentation is needed so we can fully serve you and your needs.

For questions contact VA Black Hills:
Jamison Hild at: 605-490-8587

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Black Hills Health Care System



VETERANS STAND DOWN

Sept. 20, 2019

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

VFW

3601 S. Minnesota Ave.

Sioux Falls, SD

TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE

**Shuttle service will be every 1/2 hour starting at
8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. from the following locations:**

- **Vet Center on 49th and Carnegie**
- **Volunteers of America (VOA) Dakotas Veteran Outreach Center on
14th and Cliff**
- **Sioux Falls VA Health Care System on 22nd and Western**

**On-the-spot help including bicycle repair, clothing,
community housing referral, medical & dental treatment, readjustment
counseling, legal assistance, Women Veteran services and much more!**

Brunch will be served from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

For more information call: (605)-330-4552

VA Black Hills Health Care System and STGi

Invite you to attend a

Ribbon Cutting and Resource Fair

to celebrate the opening of our new

Pierre VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic

September 18, 2019

Join us on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at our new location on 1615 North Harrison Avenue Ste. 20, inside the Northridge Mall. Meet the staff, tour the spacious clinic and learn more about all our services.

**1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Public Tours, VA information and resource booths,
light refreshments**

1:30 p.m. Welcome and Ribbon Cutting



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Black Hills Health Care System



Choose VA

Sep 12—SD Veterans Commission Conf. Call Meeting—4:00 pm (CT)
Sep 14—SDSU 2nd Annual Veterans Affairs Golf Tournament—Edgebrook Golf Course—8:30 am (CT) registration
Sep 18—Ribbon Cutting for Pierre CBOC—Pierre (1615 North Harrison Avenue—Suite 20) - 1:00 pm—3:00 pm (CT)
Sep 20—Veterans Stand Down—Sioux Falls (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue—9:00 am—1:00 pm (CT)
Sep 20—Sioux Falls POW/MIA Program—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park (1021 W. Bailey Street) - 6:30 pm (CT)
Sep 21—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street)—9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Sep 21—Davison County Veterans Wellness and Benefit Fair—Mitchell Corn Palace—8:00 am—4:30 pm (CT)
Sep 21—EAFB Health and Wellness Expo—Rushmore Mall—Rapid City—9:00 am—Noon (MT)
Sep 21-22—SD American Legion Golf Tournament—Hartford Golf Course
Sep 24—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 5 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—8:45 pm (CT)—doors open at 7:15
Nov 2—Second Annual Hangar Dance (Midwest Honor Flight Benefit)—Mid America Museum of Aviation—Sioux City, IA—7:00 pm (CT)
Nov 5—Veteran Stand Down and Resource Fair—Rapid City Rushmore Plaza Civic Center—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Dec 3—Governor Noem's Budget Address
Dec 9—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony—Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
Jan 14—State of the State Address
Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception
Feb 21-23—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
Mar 27-29—SD Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Dakota Sioux Casino—Watertown
Jun 18-21—American legion State Convention—Huron



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

